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Recreation Strategies for the Promotion of Health

Alberta

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RECREATION STRATEGIES FOR THE PROMOTION OF HEALTH

-Minister's Briefing-

A Paper Presented at the 1986
Conference of the Inter-Provincial Ministers
Responsible for Sport and Recreation

Prepared by the Province of Alberta

October 1986

RECREATION STRATEGIES FOR THE PROMOTION OF HEALTH

Background

Canadians have the potential to be healthier than they are. The Provincial and Territorial Ministers Responsible for Sport and Recreation have the ability to contribute significantly to the realization of that potential.

Research has shown that three quarters of all illnesses are the result of environments and lifestyle choices and are, therefore, preventable. It has also been shown that leisure behaviour is an important part of lifestyle development and that recreation can be a major vehicle for the promotion of health.

Ministerial Commitment to the Promotion of Health through Recreation

At the 1985 Conference of the Inter-Provincial Ministers Responsible for Sport and Recreation, the Ministers resolved to take an active part in promoting health and shaping the future of Canadian society. The specific resolutions made at that conference have reinforced many existing health promotion initiatives and inspired other undertakings.

The Need for Provincial Strategies

The Ministers' responses to the 1985 Conference resolutions are the first steps in developing provincial strategies for the promotion of health through recreation. Such strategies are necessary for efficient

implementation of programs and services. Just as strategies were designed for the development of the recreation infrastructure, so too must strategies be designed for the development of individual awareness, attitudes and skills that promote healthy and satisfying living.

Principles of Strategy Development

Strategies for the promotion of health through individual recreation participation are based on three major principles.

1. A specific health benefit is defined and established as the objective of the program activity. Health benefits may be physical, psychological, spiritual or social.

2. Programs and services are targeted to an identifiable population.

3. Appropriate behavior change strategies are utilized. Appropriateness is determined by target, objective and role of the delivery agency. Strategies may be educative, persuasive, competence development, power, or facilitative.

The Delivery of Health Promoting Recreation Programs

Recreation programs which promote healthy lifestyles can be delivered directly by the Ministers or in cooperation with allied agencies and corporate partners. Two potential partners in the promotion of healthy lifestyles through recreation are public health agencies and the private sector.

If the potential of recreation as a major vehicle for the promotion of health is to be realized, there needs to be an effective and co-operative

working relationship between the ministries of health and recreation. Private sector partnerships can more effectively be promoted when the Ministry staff have developed health-promoting recreation initiatives that can easily be described in terms of 1) the intended health benefits, 2) the proposed target population, and 3) the appropriate behaviour change strategy to be employed.

Questions for Discussion

It is important at this time that the Ministers reflect upon the accomplishments to date and confirm their resolve to actively promote appropriate lifestyle alternatives through recreation. This requires that they consider several important questions.

1. How can limited Ministry or corporate partnership resources be directed to increased development of awareness, knowledge, beliefs, attitudes and skills to permit the individual to seek and experience the health benefits of active participation in recreation pursuits without adversely affecting the work already being done for the development of the recreation infrastructure?

2. Should an instrument that can facilitate the measurement of the health benefits of recreation be developed for use by all provinces and territories? What existing instruments could be used for the evaluation of the health promotion potential of programs and services, and could any of them be used by all provinces and territories to facilitate the exchange of ideas and information about successful program initiatives?

3. Are the Ministers limited to promoting and providing programs and services that contribute primarily to physical health? How much attention should be given by the Ministers to the other aspects of healthy living and what kinds of interagency cooperation would be required to effectively promote health through recreation?

4. What are the most effective and appropriate behaviour change strategies (i.e. educative, persuasive, competence development, power, facilitative) that can be utilized by provincial and territorial sport and recreation ministries to facilitate the adoption of healthy individual recreation behaviours?

5. To what extent and by whom should employee fitness initiatives be promoted, supported and provided? More specifically, does the Minister Responsible for Sport and Recreation have an implied or direct responsibility for taking the lead and actively promoting healthy lifestyles for his Ministry and other government department personnel?

6. What can the Ministers do to facilitate the development of lifestyle development expertise in their staff and other key individuals in the delivery system?

The discussion that results from such questions will clarify viewpoints and commitments related to provincial and territorial initiatives in the promotion of health. Future efforts that follow these commitments will contribute significantly to the realization of recreation

as a major vehicle for the promotion of healthy lifestyles and the well-being of Canadians.

Resolution

Whereas: The resolutions adopted by the Ministers at the 1985 Conference still apply at the provincial and territorial levels, and

Whereas: The Ministers continue to identify principles and strategies that contribute to the realization of recreation's potential as a major vehicle for the promotion of health,

Therefore be it resolved:

That the Ministers continue to develop comprehensive provincial and territorial strategies for the promotion of health through recreation.

RECREATION STRATEGIES FOR THE PROMOTION OF HEALTH

-Executive Summary-

A Paper Presented at the 1986
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Responsible for Sport and Recreation

Prepared by the Province of Alberta

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RECREATION STRATEGIES FOR THE PROMOTION OF HEALTH

Introduction

In Canada, where the quality of life enjoyed by its people is beyond even the grandest expectations of much of the world's population, health and well-being is an achievable goal. It is a goal that can be reached through dedicated and concerted effort by individuals and families, and by agencies whose mandate includes protecting and, where appropriate, enhancing the quality of life that we enjoy.

Research has shown that Canadians have the potential to be healthier than they are. About three quarters of all illnesses are the result of environments and lifestyle choices and are, therefore, considered to be preventable. The promotion of healthy lifestyles and recreation behaviours will contribute to the realization of this potential for greater health.

During the 1985 Conference of the Inter-Provincial Ministers Responsible for Sport and Recreation, the Ministers resolved to take an active part in promoting health and shaping the future of Canadian society.

Purpose of this Paper

The purpose of this paper is to review the resolutions made by the Ministers in 1985, document initiatives undertaken in relation to those resolutions, and discuss several principles that are important to continued efforts by the Ministers in developing strategies to promote health through

recreation. The paper also considers the relationship of provincial and territorial recreation ministries to provincial and territorial health ministries and explores the potential of private sector involvement in the promotion of healthy lifestyles.

Ministerial Resolutions and Action

The resolutions made by the Ministers at the 1985 Conference of the Inter-Provincial Ministers Responsible for Sport and Recreation have reinforced many existing health promotion initiatives and inspired the undertaking of others. The following are brief descriptions of how the Ministers have responded to the resolutions over the past year:

1. *It was resolved that the Ministers would recognize that recreation can be a major vehicle for improving the health and life satisfaction of Canadians.*

   With varying degrees of directness and formality, the Ministers have recognized the value of recreation in promoting healthy lifestyles. Revised mission statements, new policies, and organizational structures have served to establish the Ministers' concern in this area.

2. *It was also resolved that the Ministers would strive to initiate action in a number of areas in order for the potential of recreation, as a major vehicle for the promotion of health, to be realized.*

   Health promotion objectives have formed the basis of major program initiatives. There has been insufficient time for the Ministers to develop and implement new programs or services as a result of the 1985 Conference, but several are in the advanced planning stages.

3. *The Ministers agreed to promote ongoing examination, based on reliable health measurement indices, of the relationship between health, recreation and lifestyles.*

All provinces and territories have expressed a need for reliable recreation and health measurement indices. Presently no ministries are involved in directly relating their recreation programs to measurable health benefits and health care costs.

4. *It was further established that the Ministers would encourage greater cooperation between and among the recreation system, the health care system and others in the development of a national and/or provincial health promotion program.*

Increased interaction between provincial recreation and health ministries has prompted some to consider joint promotional efforts. At this early stage there has been no formal move by the provincial recreation ministries to cooperate in the development of a national campaign for the promotion of the health benefits of recreation. Some provinces, however, are achieving limited success within their own jurisdictions in the area of promotion of healthy lifestyles.

5. *It was resolved that the Ministers would explore the feasibility of establishing ways and means which would lead to greater integration of the activities of the various health-related agencies within and among all levels of government.*

Several Ministers have met with cabinet colleagues for the purposes of information sharing and coordination of health promotion initiatives. Some progress has been made in establishing the position of sport and recreation ministries with respect to the promotion of healthy lifestyles.

6. *The Ministers resolved to actively pursue the development of an integrated program, based on collaboration between the education and recreation systems, designed to promote the acquisition of positive recreation attitudes, skills and knowledge among the youth of Canada.*

Since the 1985 Conference, significant progress has been made in creating opportunities for recreation ministries to review and contribute to the content of school curriculum guidelines and resources. There is a growing interest in leisure education and other

youth-oriented programs that teach principles and skills of lifestyle development.

7. *It was also resolved that the Ministers would continue to promote opportunities for the development of qualified recreation/fitness leaders.*

All provincial and territorial Ministers are presently involved in funding or otherwise providing training opportunities for fitness leaders. Recreation leadership is promoted by professional or volunteer associations which generally receive some support from the recreation ministries.

8. *The Ministers also resolved to continue to encourage public and private organizations to develop employee fitness and lifestyle programs.*

Only one province directly supports staff participation in fitness and lifestyle activities but many ministries encourage such participation in other ways and extend that encouragement to employees in other government departments and the private sector.

Principles of Strategy Development

The Ministers' responses to the 1985 Conference resolutions are the first steps in developing comprehensive provincial strategies for the promotion of health through recreation. Future programs and services that would form an integral part of such strategies must be built upon proven principles and practices of programming for lifestyle development.

Objective Setting

In the context of the Ministers' immediate and long-range concern for the promotion of health, objective setting may be described simply as defining the desired health benefit(s). The desired health benefits are

responses to identified needs that may be of a physical, psychological, spiritual or social nature.

Physical Health Benefits. Responses to those needs which relate to the functioning and conditioning of the body and its physical systems.

Psychological Health Benefits. Responses to those needs which relate to the mental, emotional and intellectual condition of an individual.

Spiritual Health Benefits. Responses to those needs which relate to the conditions of an individual's values and conscience.

Social Health Benefits. Responses to those needs which relate to the condition of an individual's ability to interact socially, accept the responsibilities of citizenship, and deal with social stress and conflict.

Any effort to encourage or otherwise affect recreation behaviour should be made with a clear statement of objective in mind. The overall objective may be to promote healthy lifestyles, but effective program development requires the clarification of objectives in terms of the specific health benefit that is desired.

Targeting

Marketing research has shown that recreation strategies which promote healthy lifestyles are most effective when directed at very specific targets. The choice of target will be influenced by and affect decisions about systems of program delivery, participation standards and expectations, pricing, promotion, and program evaluation.

Developing Behaviour Change Strategies

Once a desired health benefit and its intended recipient have been identified, it is time to consider the approach that will be taken in promoting the behaviours that will lead to realization of that health benefit. Two general approaches are used in the encouragement of healthy recreational activity. One is described as 'development of the recreation infrastructure' and it involves the facilitation of recreation participation by the provision of facilities, programs and services. The other general approach is described as 'development of the individual'. This involves the enhancement of recreation awareness, knowledge, beliefs, attitudes and skills to permit the individual to seek, recognize and experience the health benefits of active participation in recreational pursuits.

The Ministers have agreed to continue present efforts in supporting and developing the recreation infrastructure, and consider strategies for affecting individual behaviour change. Five specific strategies are:

1. Educative Strategies attempt to encourage positive and prevent negative forms of recreation behaviour through relatively unbiased presentation of information.

2. Persuasive Strategies attempt to promote the inclusion of one or more forms of recreation behaviour into people's lifestyles by presenting a message which is biased or emotionally loaded by the manner in which it is structured and presented.

3. Competence Development Strategies attempt to provide personal skills, abilities and control over experiences which will allow individuals to adopt and maintain one or more forms of recreation behaviour.

4. Power Strategies are characterized by the use of demands from an influential or powerful body.

5. Facilitative Strategies do not focus directly on the individual, but are aimed at improving the environment, including the recreation system.

An Analysis of Existing Provincial Programs

In the context of the previous comments on strategies for affecting individual recreation behaviour, an informal analysis of the major program initiatives from all of the provinces and territories was conducted. The comments are intentionally very general but do offer a clear view of how the Ministers are presently dealing with the promotion of health through recreation. Based on the results of the analysis, it was concluded that:

1. Most programs of provincial and territorial sport and recreation ministries emphasize physical health benefits while relatively few programs emphasize the promotion of psychological, spiritual and social health.

2. Some programs and services of the provincial and territorial ministries are targetted, but there are many which are not.

3. The most common behaviour change strategies used by the provinces and territories are facilitative and educative.

A Look at One Minister's Health Promotion Initiatives

In response to an analysis of recreation programs and services provided by his ministry, the Minister of Alberta Recreation and Parks has initiated several activities which further illustrate the commitment made by all Ministers at the 1986 Conference.

1. The Minister created the Leisure Lifestyle Development Section to "assist all Albertans in developing positive leisure attitudes and behaviours which maximize their potential to adopt healthier, more active and satisfying lifestyles".

2. The Minister has met with his cabinet colleagues and expressed his interest in health promotion. These efforts have resulted in closer working relationships with the Department of Education and several agencies and departments which are represented on the Interdepartmental Committee for Health Promotion.

3. Proposed policy statements, enriched programs and innovative educational and management resources reflect the Minister's resolve to contribute significantly to the promotion of healthy lifestyles.

Alberta's efforts in the area of health promotion are, as with most provinces and territories, in the early stages of development. The Ministry has accepted the challenge to act on the resolutions of the 1985 Conference and is striving to increase the value and realize the full potential of the services and programs that the ministry offers.

Considerations for the Delivery of Health Promotion Initiatives of Recreation Ministries

Recreation programs which promote healthy lifestyles can be delivered directly by the Ministers or in cooperation with allied agencies and corporate partners. Two potential partners in the promotion of healthy lifestyles through recreation are public health agencies and the private sector.

Relationship Between Ministries of Health and Recreation

If the potential of recreation as a major vehicle for the promotion of health is to be realized, there needs to be an effective and co-operative working relationship between the ministries of health and recreation. In provinces and territories where the ministries of health and recreation are not organizationally connected, a concerted effort is required to develop and maintain an effective relationship that facilitates the promotion of health through recreation.

Relationship with the Private Sector

There is potential for more private sponsorship and this potential is worthy of exploration by each of the Ministers in his own province. Private sector partners can more effectively be promoted when the Ministry staff have developed health-promoting recreation initiatives that can easily be described in terms of 1) the intended health benefits, 2) the proposed target population, and 3) the appropriate behaviour change strategy to be employed. This information is particularly useful in

matching the objectives of the program with the interests of a potential private sector partner or sponsor.

Conclusion

It is important at this time that the Ministers reflect upon the accomplishments to date and confirm their resolve to actively promote appropriate lifestyle alternatives through recreation. This requires that they consider several important questions.

These questions relate to the need for staff expertise in the area of health promotion, the role and responsibility of the recreation ministry in promoting employee fitness and lifestyle programs, and the logistics of maintaining service in the area of infrastructure development while expanding efforts in development of the individual. The Ministers also need to be concerned with questions about the appropriateness of utilizing certain types of behaviour change strategies, measurement of recreation's health benefits, and relationships with agencies and organizations having allied interests.

The discussion that results from such questions will clarify viewpoints and commitments related to provincial and territorial initiatives in the promotion of health. Future efforts that follow these commitments will contribute significantly to the realization of recreation as a major vehicle for the promotion of healthy lifestyles and the well-being of Canadians.

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Table of Contents

Introduction 1

Purpose of this Paper 3

Ministerial Commitment to Health Promotion through Recreation 4

Major Ministerial Activities in the Promotion of Health through Recreation 5

Development of Strategies for the Promotion of Healthy Lifestyles through Recreation 13

An Analysis of Existing Provincial Programs 20

A Look at One Minister's Health Promotion Initiatives 22

Considerations for the Delivery of Health Promotion Initiatives of Recreation Ministries 24

Conclusion 27

Appendix 30

RECREATION STRATEGIES FOR THE PROMOTION OF HEALTH

Introduction

The quality of life currently enjoyed by Canadians is beyond even the grandest expectations of much of the world's population. Canada is a nation which enjoys freedom and a sense of security. It is a nation of economic strength and diversity. It is a nation where a rich cultural heritage weaves strengthening fibres into the fabric of society, where Nature's splendor and simple beauty can be enjoyed by all, and where social order is based on a firmly entrenched sense of justice and honour. Canada is a nation where the pursuit of truth, knowledge and wisdom is protectively nurtured and where health and well-being is an achievable goal.

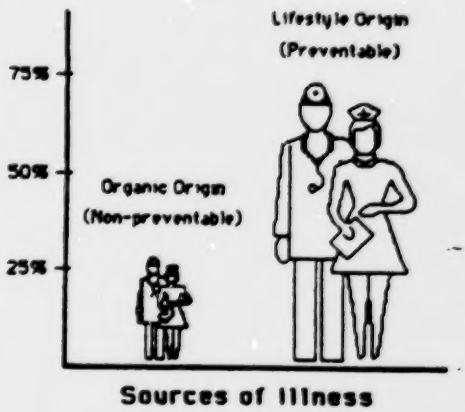
It is the opportunity and responsibility of all Canadians to protect and, where appropriate, enhance the quality of life that we all enjoy. Such protection and enhancement is necessary because of the many negative influences that can erode people's sense of security, weaken the nation's economic, cultural and moral foundations, and deprive individuals of the benefits of healthy life. It requires sincere and concerted effort to counter the effects of such influences.

One quality of life factor which is a major concern and to which the proponents of recreation can dedicate concerted effort is health. Canadians have the potential to be healthier than they are. The fact that this potential has not been realized can be linked directly to lifestyle and, consequently, to patterns of recreation behaviour.

Health is defined as not only the absence of disease, but also the physical, mental and social well-being and well-functioning of individuals,

and the relationship of health to lifestyle and to recreation has been clearly established. It is important to note, however, that recreation is just one of several factors influencing lifestyle and health.

Research has shown that only about one quarter of all illness and disease is a consequence of the basic biology of man and the organic make-up of the individual. The remaining three quarters of health problems are the result of environments and lifestyle choices and are, therefore, considered to be preventable. The majority of preventable health problems can be traced to people's inability to cope with the stresses and physical demands of a rapidly changing world and an increasingly complicated social environment. Health, then, is inseparable from the way in which people live their lives: that is, their lifestyles.



Sources of Illness

People who have healthy lifestyles are those who develop a sense of overall balance and well-being and are able to function in their environments with minimal stress. They are more likely to avoid behaviours that lead to health problems than are people who do not enjoy a well-balanced, fulfilling lifestyle. Recreation can contribute significantly to balance and fulfillment in an individual's life.

Recreation can provide a means for the satisfaction of a variety of needs that cannot be satisfied in other situations. It is a major lifestyle component for children and youth and, like work activity and family involvements, recreation is a major component of an individual's life

during adulthood. Research has shown that there is a strong relationship between recreation and psychological well-being. The relationship between recreation and social and spiritual well-being is also well documented, and the positive influence of recreation on physical health is an accepted fact.

During the 1985 Inter-Provincial Conference of Ministers Responsible for Sport and Recreation, the Ministers looked closely at recreation as a major vehicle for the promotion of health. They resolved to take an active part in promoting health and shaping the future of Canadian society, and have, in the months following the conference, demonstrated their commitment in many ways.

Purpose of this Paper

The purpose of this paper is to review the resolutions made by the Ministers in 1985, document initiatives undertaken in relation to those resolutions, and discuss several principles that are important to continued efforts by the Ministers in developing strategies to promote health through recreation. The paper also considers the relationship of provincial recreation ministries to provincial health ministries and explores the potential of private sector involvement in the promotion of healthy lifestyles.

Ministerial Commitment to Health Promotion through Recreation

At the 1985 Inter-Provincial Conference of Ministers Responsible for Sport and Recreation, the Ministers agreed to:

1. Recognize that recreation can be a major vehicle for improving the health and life satisfaction of Canadians;

2. Strive to initiate action in a number of areas in order for the potential of recreation, as a major vehicle for the promotion of health, to be realized;

3. Promote ongoing examination, based on reliable recreation and health measurement indices, of the relationship between health, recreation and lifestyles;

4. Encourage greater cooperation among and between the recreation system, the health care system and others in the development of a national and/or provincial health promotion program;

5. Explore the feasibility of establishing ways and means which would lead to greater integration of the activities of the various health-related organizations within and among all levels of government;

6. Actively pursue the development of an integrated program based on collaboration between the education and recreation systems, designed to promote the acquisition of positive recreation attitudes, skills and knowledge among the youth of Canada;

7. Continue to promote opportunities for the development of qualified recreation/fitness leaders; and

8. Continue to encourage public and private organizations to develop employee fitness and lifestyle programs.

It should be noted that, prior to the 1985 conference, many ministries were already involved in activities that contributed to the promotion of healthy lifestyles and were consistent with some of the Ministers' resolutions. The commitment of the Ministers to these resolutions is also demonstrated by the numerous initiatives undertaken since the the close of that Conference.

Major Ministerial Activities in the Promotion of Health through Recreation

While the amount of time that has elapsed between the formalizing of the Ministers' resolutions and the preparation of this paper is relatively brief, the continuation of previous initiatives and the introduction of new directions or activities by the Ministers illustrate the increased emphasis by all provinces and territories in using recreation as a major vehicle for the promotion of health. For example:

1. Several provinces have formally acknowledged recreation as a major vehicle for the promotion of health.

> In the Province of Alberta, the Department of Recreation and Parks draft policy statement declares that recreation is "an important means to enhance the quality of lives of Albertans" and "participation in recreational experiences contributes to a person's psychological, social, and physical well-being".
>
> The Province of Ontario, Ministry of Tourism and Recreation sport and fitness policy cites recreation as "enabling the people of Ontario to achieve growth and well-being".
>
> The Yukon Territory, Northwest Territories and Prince Edward Island also have formal positions on recreation as a contibutor to "the quality of life", and Nova Scotia has a clear

statement regarding the health benefits from recreation participation noted in its ***Recreation Reference Series.***

The mission statement of Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Recreation strongly implies a positive relationship between recreation and health by stating that the Department will, at the regional level, support the delivery of the programs of Manitoba Health.

Although in British Columbia there is no precise written statement concerning recreation's value as a major vehicle in health promotion, the action of placing responsibility for fitness development in the Department of Health does, in fact, exemplify the relationship between fitness and health.

The Province of Saskatchewan very clearly claims that the quality of life can be enhanced by enabling people to "fully experience the cultural, health and social benefits resulting from the development and promotion of sport and cultural activities and resources".

The Ministers have, with varying degrees of directness and formality, recognized the role of recreation as a major vehicle for improving the health and life satisfaction of Canadians. This recognition of the value of recreation in promoting healthy lifestyles is essential, and continuing progress in this area will be realized when planning priorities and resource allocations are adjusted to permit a greater emphasis on the recreation/health relationship.

2. Health promotion objectives have formed the basis of major program initiatives in several provinces. There has been insufficient time for the Ministers to develop and implement new programs or services as a result of the 1985 Conference, but a few existing programs serve as good examples of initiatives that will assist in the realization of recreation as a major vehicle for the promotion of health.

In the Yukon Territory a series of special events during Carnival Week emphasizes exposure to and participation in recreational activities which are intended to affect lifestyle patterns towards greater health.

All provinces and territories are active partners in the coordination and promotion of National Physical Activity Week - a program which heightens national awareness of the need for and the value of regular physical activity. The increased awareness and resulting exposure to recreational activity promotes healthy lifestyles for many formerly non-active Canadians.

Most provincial recreation ministries work with and support agencies that promote fitness and conduct personal fitness testing. These agencies also strengthen the fitness leadership network of each province and promote scientific research in the areas of fitness and lifestyle.

There are indications that, as provincial and territorial ministries develop new recreation programs and update existing ones, health objectives are being given greater consideration as essential elements of program design. Such objectives, when incorporated at all program levels (i.e. from "learn to" programs to "high performance enhancement" programs) and in all activity areas (e.g. sport, outdoor recreation, culture, fitness, etc.), contribute significantly to the realization of recreation's potential as a major vehicle for the promotion of health.

3. All provinces and territories have expressed a need for reliable recreation and health measurement indices. Presently no ministries are involved in directly relating their recreation programs to measurable health benefits and health care costs.

The lack of scientific measurement of the health benefits of recreation services does not mean that such measurement is impossible or impractical.

Although difficult, measurement of the health/recreation relationship within the individual is possible. It requires a large amount of personal information since the process involves developing and correlating personal health profiles with individual patterns of recreation behaviour. It also requires large, representative samples if generalizations about the population or segments of the population are to be made.

In provinces or territories where personal health care records are available to the Ministry, and where existing programs of data collection facilitate the development of corresponding recreation behaviour profiles, the potential already exists for valuable research and measurement. The results of such measurement would be most applicable to the province wherein the research is conducted, but all provinces and territories would benefit greatly from the expanded knowledge base and reaffirmed justification of Ministry activities.

4. Increased interaction of recreation and health ministries has prompted some provinces to seriously consider joint promotional efforts within their own jurisdictions. At this early stage, there has been no formal effort by the provincial ministries to develop a national campaign to promote the health benefits of recreation but several provincial initiatives are worthy of note.

> The Province of Ontario has a Tourism and Recreation sponsored series of television vignettes which feature Roland Michener talking about the "high road to health". The message emphasizes the role of recreation and physical activity in promoting personal health and well-being. It helps to address the concerns of this ministry and the Ministry of Health.
>
> Cooperation between the health and recreation departments in

the Province of Manitoba has resulted in numerous written resources being developed for promoting health and recreational activity.

In New Brunswick the ***"Lifestyle Awareness Program"*** deals with physical, cultural, nutritional and social aspects of lifestyle development. This is an individualized, activity-oriented program which uses recreational participation and health and social education in an integrated approach to health promotion.

It should be remembered that a program of health promotion is not necessarily a multi-media advertizing campaign. It may include participation events, facilitation activities, educational development, audio or visual or electronic information distribution, or regulation. Future efforts of the Ministers and their health ministry colleagues in developing a national promotion campaign would be most effective when activity in all areas of the promotion or advancement of health is stressed.

5. Several Ministers have, since the 1985 Conference, met with cabinet colleagues responsible for health or health-related departments to explore ways and means which would lead to greater integration of the activities of various health-related organizations. The ***"Shaping the Future"*** audio-visual presentation prepared for the 1985 Conference has been used effectively in many instances. From the results of such meetings it is apparent that the Ministers responsible for sport and recreation will need to continue to work hard to develop the integration that they propose.

Since recreation is only one of several factors having a positive influence on health and life satisfaction, it is essential that the Ministers integrate their efforts with those of other related ministries, and establish recreation's status as a major vehicle for the promotion of health.

6. There has been a considerable amount of activity involving the cooperative efforts of education and recreation systems in integrating programs and curriculum resources.

The British Columbia government has introduced a new secondary school course called ***"Community Recreation 12"***. The course was designed by the Department of Education to introduce students to community volunteering and the programs and services of local recreation authorities.

In Nova Scotia the local school systems receive financial and other assistance from the Minister of Culture, Recreation and Fitness to operate outdoor education camps and to invite visiting artists into the schools.

Alberta is an active partner in an interdepartmental initiative that has established an extensive, integrated community school program. The program promotes community use of school facilities, community related curriculum, community resource people in the schools, and the addressing of community issues in local educational programs. The Minister of Education and the Minister of Recreation and Parks have also had formal communication regarding several major areas of cooperation in providing a wide range of recreation and health education opportunities in all Alberta schools.

Four provincial recreation ministries (British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario and Nova Scotia) are now given the opportunity to review and provide input to leisure and health education curriculum proposals. This has been an area of significant progress since the 1985 Conference.

The task force which was established at the 1985 Conference and charged with reviewing federal and provincial initiatives in the area of youth fitness has also contributed to a greater understanding of the potential for the promotion of healthy lifestyles among the youth of Canada through joint school and recreation system action. The resolutions made at the 1986 Canadian Summit on Fitness have given further support to ministerial activities in support of fitness and health promotion for youth.

Provincial and territorial ministries of sport and recreation are able to effectively promote the acquisition of positive recreation attitudes, skills and knowledge among the youth of Canada through the formal education system. While the efforts of the Ministers have resulted in several provincial or local school authorities establishing leisure education and education for healthy living as major objectives of the school program or curriculum, the potential exists for even more collaboration between education and recreation systems at the provincial and local levels.

7. Opportunities for the development and qualification of recreation and fitness leaders are promoted across the country.

> New Brunswick, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia have established fitness leader certification programs which are administered by non-government agencies. All provincial and territorial recreation ministries are involved in funding or otherwise providing training opportunities for fitness leaders.
>
> Most provinces and territories have adopted the national Volunteer Management Skills program and are using it to supplement their own programs and activities for training and recognizing volunteer recreation leaders.
>
> Most provincial and territorial ministries play a major role in supporting professional associations in the development of community recreation leadership.

Fitness leadership in Canada is fairly well developed and there are widely accepted standards which either govern or guide fitness leaders, appraisers, trainers and administrators. Such standards allow for the development of adequate opportunities for leadership development. Recreation leadership, on the other hand, is supported in varying degrees by provincial or regional associations with different standards of training

or performance being established by the many employers of recreation professionals or volunteers. The standards, therefore, are not uniform and training opportunities are difficult to develop in an efficient manner.

The Ministers continue to promote opportunities for the development of qualified recreation and fitness leaders, but generally look to provincial or national associations to establish standards against which the results of any such development opportunities might be measured.

8. There is a growing involvement of provincial and territorial ministries in the encouragement of employee fitness and lifestyle programs in both the public and private sectors.

> The Department of Health in British Columbia has a nationally recognized program of employee lifestyle and fitness development. However, the Province of Quebec is the only province with an employee fitness program for Sport and Recreation Ministry personnel. While Kino-Quebec actively promotes employee fitness in the public and private sectors, the Minister made it possible for his staff to have time off for participation in special programs similar to National Physical Activity Week, or to have subsidized use of fitness facilities and programs.
>
> Several other sport and recreation Ministers have encouraged their staff to initiate self-directed fitness and lifestyle programs. Three ministries now have ongoing employee fitness promotional programs and most provincial and territorial recreation ministries are active participants in or sponsors of the Corporate Challenge program.
>
> The establishment of the inter-provincial task force on employee fitness is further evidence of the Ministers' genuine desire to seek appropriate means by which to enhance the lifestyles of their employees and of employees in general. Several resolutions made at the 1986 Canadian Summit on Fitness (to which the Ministers sent representatives) emphasized the

appropriateness of and need for provincial and territorial government leadership in this area.

Establishing employee fitness as a priority for provincial governments has been a challenge for the Ministers but indications of success are appearing in the many related crown corporations that now provide fitness facilities or benefits to their staff.

In the short time since the conclusion of the 1985 Inter-Provincial Conference of Ministers Responsible for Sport and Recreation, the Ministers have provided numerous examples of programs and services that relate directly to the eight resolutions which arose from their discussion of recreation's relationship to health. Even though most of the initiatives highlighted in the foregoing discussion are not specific results of those resolutions, they are good examples of what the Ministers are working towards and expecting as eventual outcomes of their commitment.

One expectation that each department, in response to the resolutions, has of itself is the development of a comprehensive strategy for the promotion of healthy lifestyles through recreation. The programs and services discussed previously are some examples of the kinds of activities that would form an integral part of such a strategy.

Development of Strategies for the Promotion of Healthy Lifestyles through Recreation

The development and implementation of strategies for the promotion of health through recreation would facilitate the realization of the

Ministers' resolutions and ultimately contribute to the health and well-being of Canadians. In order to achieve such goals, these strategies would have to be built upon proven principles and practices of programming for lifestyle development. A clear understanding of these principles and practices is important to the effective utilization of recreation programs and services in the promotion of healthy lifestyles.

Objective Setting

One major consideration in the development of programs that affect the recreation behaviours and lifestyles of individuals is the practice of objective setting. In the context of the Ministers' immediate and long-range concern for the promotion of health, objective setting may be described simply as stating the desired health benefit(s). The desired health benefits are responses to identified needs that may be of a physical, psychological, spiritual or social nature.

Physical Health Benefits. Responses to those needs which relate to the functioning and conditioning of the body and its physical systems. For example: muscle strength, cardiovascular endurance, flexibility.

Psychological Health Benefits. Responses to those needs which relate to the mental, emotional and intellectual condition of an individual. Satisfaction of these needs helps the individual to understand the nature of the recreation experience and to cope with psychological stress. Reduction of psychological stress contributes positively to physical and social health.

Spiritual Health Benefits. Responses to those needs which relate to the conditions of an individual's values and conscience. Spiritual health permits the reconciliation of leisure behaviours with what the individual senses to be right and with what he

perceives to be his reason for existence. The ability for such personal reconciliation has been shown to contribute in a major way to psychological, physical and social health.

Social Health Benefits. Responses to those needs which relate to the condition of an individual's ability to interact socially, accept the responsibilities of citizenship, and deal with social stress and conflict. Unsatisfied social needs can lead to physical, psychological and spiritual illnesses.

It is important to note that, even though a specific health benefit may be identified in a program profile as the principle objective of that program, it is likely that any recreation program will also provide some benefits in the other areas of personal health.

Any effort by the Ministers to encourage or otherwise affect recreation behaviour should be made with a clear statement of objective in mind. The overall objective is to promote healthy lifestyles, but effective program development requires the clarification of objectives in terms of the specific health benefit that is desired.

Targeting

Another major consideration in developing recreation programs that promote healthy lifestyles is the intended target or recipient of program benefits. Target populations should be identifiable and are usually homogeneous with respect to general health needs and patterns of recreation behaviour.

Targets can be identified in many ways (e.g. age, gender, geographic location, socio-economic status, occupation type, participation level, leisure locale, fitness level). The choice of target will be influenced by or

affect decisions about systems of program delivery, participation standards and expectations, pricing, promotion, and program evaluation.

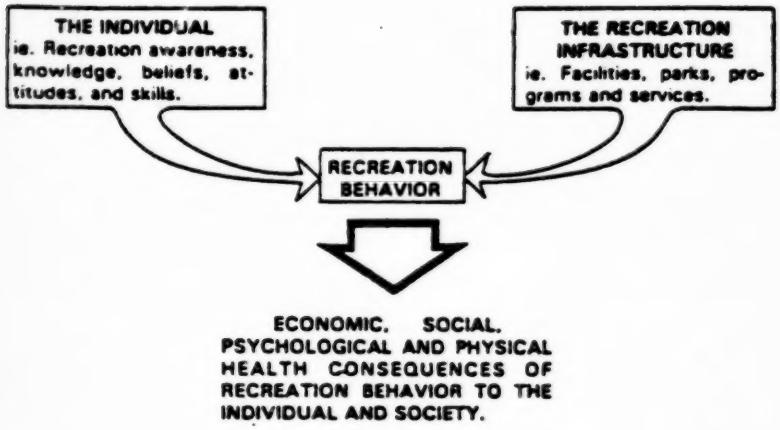
Marketing research has shown that recreation strategies that promote healthy lifestyles are most effective when directed at very specific targets. While attempts to affect "anyone and everyone" may occassionally be successful, the most efficient and promising bids for success appear as programs that are planned for and delivered to specific individuals and populations.

Developing Behaviour Change Strategies

Once a desired health benefit and its intended recipient have been identified, it is time to consider the approach that will be taken in promoting the behaviours that will lead to realization of that health benefit. There are several behaviour change strategies that can be considered.

At the 1985 Conference the Ministers recognized that they utilize two general approaches in the encouragement of healthy recreational activity. They described one approach as 'development of the recreation infrastructure' and explained that it involves the facilitation of recreation participation by the provision of facilities, programs and services. It was suggested that individual behaviour and, consequently, health are positively affected by the recreation infrastructure when it provides social, economic and physical environments that are conducive to satisfying recreation experience.

The other general approach described by the Ministers was 'development of the individual'. This involves the enhancement of recreation awareness, knowledge, beliefs, attitudes and skills to permit the individual to seek, recognize and experience the health benefits of active participation in recreational pursuits.


THE INDIVIDUAL
ie. Recreation awareness, knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and skills.
THE RECREATION INFRASTRUCTURE
ie. Facilities, parks, programs and services.
RECREATION BEHAVIOR
ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH CONSEQUENCES OF RECREATION BEHAVIOR TO THE INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETY.

The programs sponsored or promoted by provincial recreation ministries that are designed to directly affect the amount and type of individual participation in health-promoting recreational activity have not, typically, received the same attention as has been given to infrastructure development. At the 1985 Conference the Ministers recognized the impact that they could and should have on the development of healthy individual lifestyles and behaviours and agreed to continue present efforts in supporting and developing the recreation infrastructure, and consider strategies for increasing and enhancing individual recreation participation. Five major strategies for affecting individual behaviour change were studied:

1. Educative Strategies attempt to encourage positive and prevent negative forms of recreation behaviour through relatively unbiased presentation of information. Awareness and knowledge of the information is expected to provide a justification for

adopting healthful behaviour. These strategies assume that individuals are rational beings capable of discerning facts and adjusting their behaviour to respond to them. These strategies may employ mass media or other methods of individual or group communication.

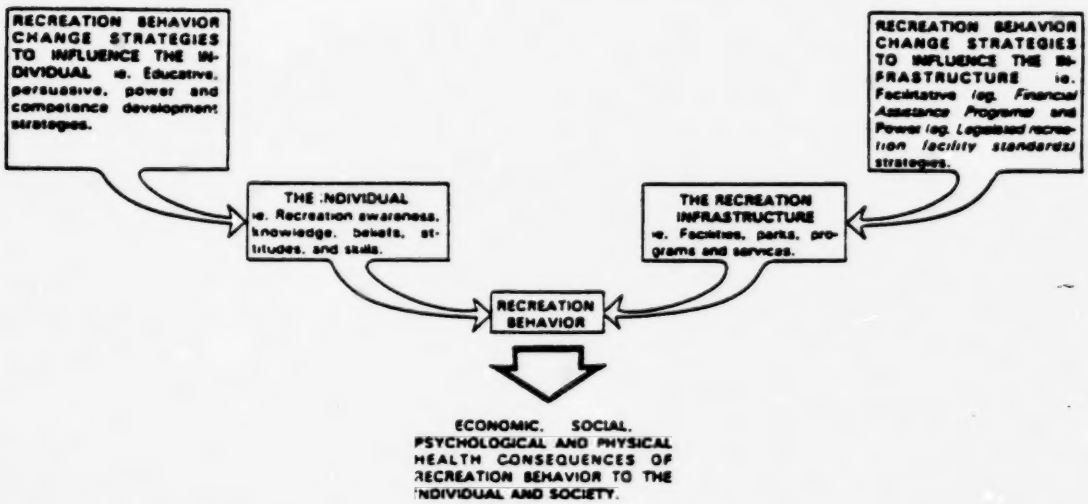
2. Persuasive Strategies attempt to promote the inclusion of one or more forms of recreation behaviour into people's lifestyles by presenting a message which is biased or emotionally loaded by the manner in which it is structured and presented. The message may convey information, but is designed primarily to affect beliefs, opinions, expectations and attitudes. Such strategies may use reasoning, urging and inducement, and may be based on rational and/or emotional appeals.

3. Competence Development Strategies attempt to provide personal skills, abilities and control over experiences which will allow individuals to adopt and maintain one or more forms of recreation behaviour. These competencies include such things as physical skills, decision-making skills, assertiveness skills, skills for coping with frustration and conflict, and skills for monitoring outcomes of personal behaviour and quality of experience.

4. Power Strategies are characterized by the use of demands from an influential or powerful body. This type of strategy employs rewards or penalties for prescribed action or inaction and has its strength in the ability and motivation of the individual to comply. Power strategies can affect the individual directly or be used to modify the environment.

5. Facilitative Strategies do not focus directly on the individual, but are aimed at improving the environment, including the recreation system. Such strategies make it possible or easier for the individual to implement and/or sustain positive forms of recreation behaviour by providing facilities, services, incentives, economic security, and social supports in such a way as to create or allow a more supportive climate for adoption of positive recreation behaviour.

Not all of the preceding strategies for changing recreation behaviour are aimed at the individual. The following diagram illustrates the relationship of behaviour change strategies to the two general approaches discussed previously:


RECREATION BEHAVIOR CHANGE STRATEGIES TO INFLUENCE THE INDIVIDUAL ie. Educative, persuasive, power and competence development strategies.
RECREATION BEHAVIOR CHANGE STRATEGIES TO INFLUENCE THE INFRASTRUCTURE ie. Facilitative (eg. Financial Assistance Programs) and Power (eg. Legislated recreation facility standards) strategies.
THE INDIVIDUAL ie. Recreation awareness, knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and skills.
THE RECREATION INFRASTRUCTURE ie. Facilities, parks, programs and services.
RECREATION BEHAVIOR
ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH CONSEQUENCES OF RECREATION BEHAVIOR TO THE INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETY.

By consciously striving to incorporate the foregoing principles of strategy development in Ministry health promotion activities, provincial and territorial recreation initiatives will be successful in encouraging and facilitating healthy lifestyles and individual well-being. The benefits to the individual and to society will be realized in improved health which will have significant positive economic consequences for the governments of the provinces and territories.

An Analysis of Existing Provincial Programs

In the context of the previous comments on strategies for affecting individual recreation behaviour, major program initiates from all of the provinces and territories were analyzed and are summarized in the following discussion. The comments are intentionally very general but do offer a clear view of how the Ministers are presently dealing with the promotion of health through recreation.

1. Recreation is typically viewed as activity. More specifically it is viewed as physical activity involving play, creativity and fun. It was, therefore, natural to find that most programs of provincial and territorial recreation and sport ministries emphasize physical health benefits while relatively few programs emphasize the promotion of psychological, spiritual and social health.

   It should be remembered, however, that a program which is primarily oriented towards physical health benefits most likely provides some benefits in the other major areas of health. In fact, it would be impossible to conceive of a program that offers only one kind of benefit and is still considered to be recreation.

   With such a strong emphasis placed on physical health by recreation ministries, a question arises concerning the overall health needs of individuals. Are some areas of individual health and well-being neglected by traditional practices of recreation programming?

   As stated earlier, recreation can be a major vehicle for the promotion of health. It can help to promote physical, psychological, spiritual and social health. Recreation is not, however, the only vehicle for the promotion of health and the Ministers of recreation are not the only agents with responsibilities for health promotion. It may be that traditional recreation programming does not adequately meet the psychological, spiritual or social needs of some program participants. This situation, if real, does not necessarily give cause for concern. It would be a matter of concern if those needs

remained unmet through the whole range of those individuals' life experiences. At this point a conscious decision must be made about an appropriate response from the providers of recreation services.

The main health promotion emphasis of provincial and territorial recreation ministries is, by design or otherwise, the promotion of physical health. The appropriateness of this emphasis must be determined by each Minister in consideration of the identified needs of his individual constituents and the priorities of his government.

2. The identification of clients and target markets is a time consuming task that several provinces have undertaken and reaped the benefits thereof. While most programs and services of the provincial and territorial ministries are precisely targetted, there are some which are not. Several programs or services have been described as being "for whoever wants it" and do not appear to be designed with any current recipient in mind. References to "the citizens of the province" as the client or audience are frequently observed, but the program or delivery strategies do not accomodate the need to have a broad range of activity thrusts to meet the varying needs of "the citizens".

Even though many programs do reach a specific target or client, there may be justification in reviewing some programs to determine if the targets are the same as originally intended.

3. The most common behaviour change strategies used by the provinces and territories are facilitative and educative. There appears to be some degree of apprehension concerning the imposition of "government values" on the citizens and, therefore, persuasive and power strategies are generally avoided.

Competency development strategies are used quite consistently across the country but are more often employed by agencies at the community level than by the ministries.

Facilitative strategies relate most directly to the development of the infrastructure while educative and competency development strategies relate to the development of the individual. These three types of behaviour change strategies appear to be considered most appropriate by provincial and territorial ministries.

> Most competency development activities of the ministries are in the form of 'learn to' programs or mass participation events (e.g. National Physical Activity Week, Royal Bank Junior Olympics, regional games, sport festivals) and most educative activities are in the form of workshops, displays, conferences, printed resources, and school curriculum modules.

While the information provided by the foregoing analysis is interesting and somewhat useful, it must be remembered that it is a review of all provincial and territorial activities and is, therefore, too general to be used as a basis for recommending specific courses of action to be taken by the individual Ministers. A province-specific analysis conducted by the Ministers for their own jurisdictions would yield valuable information about the quality of health their own jurisdictions would yield valuable information about the amount and quality of health promotion activities currently being conducted.

A Look at One Minister's Health Promotion Initiatives

The value of conducting a careful review of the Ministry's activities in health promotion is illustrated by the responses of one provincial Minister to such an examination. The example cited is from the province of Alberta.

Alberta's Minister of Recreation and Parks instructed his staff to undertake a major review of the organization of his Ministry and to re-examine the purpose, goals and objectives that guided the Department's activities. Several internal and external studies were commissioned and the

results of those studies and consultations caused several actions that are of major significance to the promotion of health through recreation.

1. The organizational restructuring of the Recreation Development Division resulted in the creation of the Leisure Lifestyle Development Section. The draft mission statement of this unit emphasizes the commitment of the Minister to "assist all Albertans in developing positive leisure attitudes and behaviours which maximize their potential to adopt healthier, more active and satisfying lifestyles". In the few months since the Leisure Lifestyle Development Section has been created, an extensive information and program delivery network has been established with local, regional, provincial, national and international organizations which share the mandate to promote healthy lifestyles and satisfying leisure behaviours. The Section has developed health promotion resources and co-ordinated several major events that promote healthy lifestyles.

2. The Minister of Recreation and Parks solicited and received enthusiastic support from the Minister of Education in encouraging significant involvement of the recreation ministry in developing school curriculum and program resources. Leisure education and other health-promoting skill development activities will be considered for incorporation into the school program and the provincial system of sport development will enjoy closer association with the school athletic and physical education network.

3. The Minister was instrumental in establishing a group of government experts in the area of lifestyle development and has supported the creation of an interdepartmental health promotion committee. This committee will provide valuable assistance to all departments and crown agencies in their increased health promotion efforts.

4. Shortly after the 1985 Conference, the Minister met with several cabinet colleagues to present his views on health promotion through recreation. The meeting established the Minister of Recreation and Park's position and opened the door for future discussions and action.

5. The Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation (a crown corporation under the Minister of Recreation and Parks) has prepared a series of lifestyle enhancement programs and has developed a case for funding of

those programs from lottery revenues. The Foundation is very supportive of recreation programs that promote healthy lifestyles.

6. The draft Recreation and Parks Policy Statement being prepared under the direction of the Minister strongly emphasizes the potential of recreation as a positive factor in the development of healthy lifestyles. The document does provide the justification for all Department activities and will certainly create an increased awareness of health promotion objectives.

7. To promote healthy lifestyles for employees of his and other government departments, the Minister has requested the development of a proposal for employee fitness initiatives within the Ministry and throughout the Alberta civil service. Ministry efforts in the promotion of employee fitness in the private sector are already very extensive and are being considered for further expansion.

8. The Minister has commissioned the development of the ***HealthCheck*** computer program that facilitates the detailed assessment of recreation programs with respect to their potential as vehicles for the promotion of health. A description of this program is included in the appendix of this paper and copies of the software package are available to the Ministers upon request.

Alberta's efforts in the area of health promotion are, as with most provinces and territories, in the early stages of development. The Ministry has accepted the challenge to act on the resolutions made at the 1985 Conference and is striving to increase the value and realize the full potential of the services and programs that the ministry offers.

Considerations for the Delivery of Health Promotion Initiatives of Recreation Ministries

One of the challenges facing Alberta Recreation and Parks as it becomes more involved in health promotion activities is the delivery of

new programs or established programs that have a new emphasis. It is not alone in its efforts to find effective delivery mechanisms.

Presently, most recreation programs with which the provincial and territorial ministries are involved are delivered in one of four different ways:

1. Direct from the provincial or territorial ministry.
2. Directly through an interagency organization.
3. Indirectly through a municipal recreation department.
4. Indirectly through a provincial association.

As a result, the ministries are becoming less involved with direct program delivery and are relying more on cooperative arrangements that reduce their activity at the detailed operational level. Two potential partners in the promotion of healthy lifestyles through recreation are health agencies and the private sector.

Relationship Between Ministries of Health and Recreation

Although the relationship between recreation and health has been addressed earlier in this paper, issues concerning the relationship between provincial departments of recreation and health also warrant exploration.

In provinces and territories where the ministries of health and recreation are not organizationally connected, a concerted effort is required to develop and maintain a relationship that facilitates the promotion of health through recreation. Some provinces have formally established interdepartmental committees on health promotion, others have ad hoc committees, and others have an informal exchange of information and expertise between staff.

In all but two provinces the department of recreation is directly

concerned with, among other things, fitness. In the two exceptions (British Columbia and Manitoba), fitness is the direct responsibility of the department of health while sport and recreation concerns are under a different ministry. These provinces have different opportunities to maintain close communication between recreation and health agencies, but the challenge of promoting integrated services can sometimes be just as challenging as in other provinces.

Whatever the organization relationship may be, the real successes come from interdepartmental or interdivisional effort. It is this effort that can be extremely rewarding.

It should also be noted in this discussion that very few provincial ministries of health or health care have formally acknowledged the role of recreation in the promotion of health. Such acknowledgement would be very useful in serving as documented justification for the establishment of interdepartmental committees or task forces which would allow for recreation and health proponents to initiate joint ventures. If the potential of recreation as a major vehicle for the promotion of health is to be realized, there needs to be an effective and open working relationship between the ministries of health and recreation.

Relationship with the Private Sector

The Ministers are not alone in their concern for a healthier Canada and for individual well-being and life satisfaction. Many corporations and private organizations have interests in promoting health through recreation. Some of these agencies can play a positive and significant role in health promotion at the provincial and national levels. Wherever possible and appropriate, private sector involvement in the development and delivery of recreation programs should be encouraged and facilitated

by the Ministers.

Such encouragement is more effective when the Ministry staff have developed health-promoting recreation programs that can easily be described in terms of 1) the intended health benefits, 2) the target population, and 3) the behaviour change strategy being employed. This information is particularly useful in matching the objectives of the program with the interests of a potential private sector partner or sponsor.

There is presently a substantial amount of cooperative effort between private organizations and provincial recreation departments in the area of health promotion through recreation. There is potential for more private sponsorship and this potential is worthy of exploration by each of the Ministers in his own province.

Conclusion

This paper has served to review the directions established by the Ministers Responsible for Sport and Recreation at their 1985 Conference. The resolutions that were passed will take several years to fully implement and it is, therefore, not the intention of this paper to add to the list of commitments already made. Rather, it is most important at this time to reflect upon the accomplishments to date and to consolidate the Ministers' commitment to actively promote appropriate lifestyle alternatives through recreation.

Such a commitment, however, requires that the Provincial Ministers responsible for sport and recreation consider several important questions which arise from the foregoing discussion. For example, the suggestion that recreation programs should have clearly defined health related

objectives emphasizes the need for individuals involved in the development and delivery of programs to have some expertise and/or experience in health promotion. What can the Ministers do to facilitate the development of that expertise in their staff and other key individuals in the delivery system?

The Ministers agree that employee fitness initiatives should be promoted and supported, but to what extent and by whom? Does the Minister responsible for sport and recreation have an implied or expressed responsibility for taking the lead and actively promoting healthy lifestyles for Ministry and other government department personnel?

The Ministers agreed in 1985 to continue present efforts in supporting and developing the recreation infrastructure, and to consider strategies for increasing and enhancing individual recreation participation. How can limited Ministry or corporate partnership resources be directed to the development of the individual without adversely affecting the work already being done for the development of the recreation infrastructure?

Several strategies that were considered for the development of the individual involved somehow affecting the attitudes and beliefs of the individuals concerned. Are provincial sport and recreation ministries justified in employing persuasive or power strategies to influence individual recreation behaviour?

There are presently no direct measurements of the health benefits that are or could be realized by participation in recreation programs. Should an instrument that can facilitate such measurement be developed for use by all provinces and territories? What existing instruments could be used for the evaluation of the health promotion potential of programs and services, and could any of them be used by all provinces and territories to facilitate the exchange of ideas and information about successful program

initiatives?

It is recognized that life satisfaction and well-being involves physical, psychological, spiritual and social health. Are the Ministers limited to providing programs and services that contribute primarily to physical health? How much attention should be given by the Ministers to the other aspects of healthy living and what kinds of interagency cooperation will be required to effectively promote health through recreation?

Response to these and associated questions will necessitate serious discussion which will result in the clarification of viewpoints and commitments related to provincial and territorial initiatives in the promotion of health. By dedicating efforts and resources to a careful study of the relationship between recreation behaviour and health, the provincial and territorial Ministers responsible for sport and recreation have demonstrated leadership in preserving and enhancing the quality of life that is available to all Canadians. Future efforts resulting from their commitment will contribute significantly to the realization of recreation as a major vehicle for the promotion of health.

Appendix

HealthCheck **- Program Description**

HealthCheck is a computer software package developed by the Leisure Lifestyle Development Section of Alberta Recreation and Parks. It is an instrument that is designed to assist in the analysis of recreation programs as potential vehicles for the promotion of healthy lifestyles. The package is relatively simple to use and can be applied to the individual circumstances of provincial, regional and community recreation agencies.

HealthCheck analyzes information about a particular recreation program or set of programs and then describes it in terms of 1) the health benefit it promotes, 2) the targeted program participants, and 3) the behaviour change strategy that it employs. For example, a late evening basketball league program may be described by ***Healthcheck*** as follows:

Analysis of *Commercial Basketball*

A. This program or set of programs* has *medium* potential for promoting social health. The potential for promoting psychological health is *low* and it is *not* likely that spiritual health benefits will be promoted through participation in this program or set of programs. The potential for the realization of physical health benefits is *high.*

B. The program or set of programs permit participation by *only certain target populations. These are:*

Males
Urban residents
Young adults

The opportunities for participation are not as high for

Females
Lower income people

Participation in the program or set of programs is well suited to *affiliated groups or teams.*

c. Behaviour change strategies that are most often employed in your efforts to promote participation in this/these or related programs are described as *educative strategies (where relatively unbiased information is presented and the individual evaluates its personal value)* and *competency development strategies (where emphasis is on providing skills that can expand or facilitate participation choices).*

* ***HealthCheck*** can also be asked to provide an analysis of the full range of programs that are recorded in its memory.

Such analyses assist the recreation agency to determine whether or not it is reaching the intended target populations and achieving the desired results in an appropriate way.

Program Options

HealthCheck is a versatile package that facilitates the analysis of specific recreation programs or of all recreation programs stored in its memory. It is possible to add information about new recreation programs and also to edit or delete information already recorded. The analyses may

be viewed on the monitor screen or printed on paper.

Input

The information required to complete a ***HealthCheck*** analysis is received through response to 48 statements that are presented to the user (i.e. the person sitting at the computer). For example, one such statement is:

> *"For this recreation program, opportunities are provided for the development and use of problem solving skills".*

The user responds to each statement by selecting 1) not at all, 2) only slightly, 3) quite a bit, or 4) mostly.

Output

HealthCheck can provide a screen image or printed report of the analysis. The analysis may be for one particular recreation program or for the full set of programs that an agency offers. An analysis of the set of programs would be most useful in assessing the overall direction and program emphasis of the recreation agency, and an analysis of a particular program would help in the evaluation of that program with respect to its potential as a promoter of healthy lifestyles.

Some Extended Uses

HealthCheck analyzes all recreation programs using the same criteria and, when used by more than one recreation agency, it is possible to compare the results of analyses and identify areas of common success or concern. When ***HealthCheck***'s analysis points to an area of particular concern for one agency, other agencies can use ***HealthCheck*** to identify

their successful programs that might be shared to help in overcoming that concern. It thereby facilitates the exchange of information and experience-based learning between agencies with allied interests in promoting healthy lifestyles through recreation.